

VZCZCXRO7966
RR RUEHCN RUEHGH RUEHVC
DE RUEHHK #2167/01 3290655
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 250655Z NOV 09
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9040
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HONG KONG 002167

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM, OES/ENV

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENIV](#) [ENRG](#) [PGOV](#) [SENV](#) [CH](#) [MC](#)

SUBJECT: MACAU'S NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BUREAU: GOOD
INTENTIONS BUT LACKING TIMELINE AND CAPACITY

REF: HONG KONG 522

¶1. SUMMARY: Macau,s newly established Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) seeks to raise the profile of environmental issues and help Macau market itself to foreign investors and visitors as a "green city." Macau environmental officials have several initiatives to promote environmentally sound operations and reduce air and noise pollution, but their timelines are unclear and the EPB's capacity is still lacking. EPB officials are focusing their efforts on public education rather than setting new standards and regulations to address their environmental concerns. END SUMMARY

¶2. Comment: The EPB's origins lie in public education. Given its lack of scientific or regulatory expertise, its current policy focus emphasizes promoting environmental awareness and certifying "green" business practices. The EPB would benefit from exposure to international norms and best practices in environmental regulation to build expertise and credibility as it grows into an effective regulatory body. End Comment

¶3. ECONOFFs recently visited Macau,s new Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) and met with Vong Man Hung, Deputy Director and Ieong Kin Si, Head of Environmental Publicity, Education and Cooperation Department to discuss the newly established Bureau's responsibilities, plans, and goals.

The New Bureau and its Responsibilities

¶4. Established on June 29, Macau,s EPB falls under the direction of the Secretary of Transport and Public Works. The EPB replaces the Environmental Protection Committee which was limited to an advisory role and had focused on public education campaigns. The Committee's limited mandate made it impossible for it to adequately address the increasing environmental concerns resulting from Macau's rapid growth. Vong stated that the Committee's replacement by a bureau-level organization allowed more resources to be devoted to key environmental concerns. The EPB was given a wider range of duties to better manage pollution control, approve infrastructure development, address the public's environmental concerns, and participate in cross-border cooperation with mainland China.

¶5. The establishment of the EPB is a big step for Macau as it seeks to raise the profile of environmental issues and position itself to foreign investors and visitors as a "green city." Its statutory responsibilities include pollution monitoring and control, environmental impact assessments, environmental planning and evaluation of infrastructure, and environmental education and promotion. The EPB also has authority over environmentally sensitive waste water treatment and refuse incineration plants, both of which are managed by private service providers.

¶16. Senior officials have tasked the EPB with several ambitious projects and initiatives to further Macau's goal of becoming a "green city." The EPB intends to focus its eco-friendly efforts on the hotel industry, construction, technology and the use of "green labeling" on Macau products. However, when asked for details, officials replied that the requirements had not yet been defined and that these projects were still in the planning stages.

¶17. EPB officials stated that Macau's top public concerns were air and noise pollution, as both were closely related to quality of life. To address air pollution problems, the EPB was examining roadside pollution and trying to promote public transportation. EPB was also considering a monorail system to reduce the number of cars on the road. In addition, it implemented in July a ban on the sale of two-stroke motorcycles and four-stroke engines with emissions exceeding legal requirements. In September, the EPB introduced the concept of "eco-ride" to encourage car pooling, the use of bicycles and public transportation. To combat noise pollution, future changes to zoning were under consideration. The EPB noted that efforts to combat both forms of pollution would require public education and changes in behavior.

¶18. Although the EPB and the Transport Bureau were under the same cabinet secretary, it was unclear how much cooperation existed between the bureaus. When asked about improvements to the bus system, EPB officials stated that old buses currently in use fell under the authority of the Transport

HONG KONG 00002167 002 OF 002

Bureau and that emission standards had not yet been agreed to. However, officials also cited examples of cooperation, such as "No Cars Day," which gained support from associations, companies, governmental departments, and thousands of citizens. Officials also spoke favorably about their cooperation with the Health Bureau on Macau's "Health City" promotion.

¶19. Officials highlighted various projects, including designating environmentally friendly schools as "Green Schools", as examples of the certification approach the EPB favored. The Green Schools project aimed to promote environmental management by engaging principals, facility management staff, and faculty and to establish a system for "green" certification, similar to the EPB's Green Hotel program. Another example was the "Green Construction" project to promote environmentally friendly construction practices in design, demolition, and building. The EPB was working with the University of Macau and ISO 9000 to establish criteria and guidelines for green construction projects. In both cases, actual regulation was considered to be far off in the future.

¶10. Macau's EPB is currently staffed by 16 employees. However, the EPB's goal is to eventually increase human resources to over one hundred staff. The timeline and approach for this staffing increase were unclear.

First Education, Then Regulation

¶11. Macau EPB officials stated that they needed to increase public awareness of environmental issues before trying to implement new environmental laws. To this end, the officials stated that one of their top priorities was to improve the quality of the environmental message to the public. For example, while reducing emissions remained a long-term objective, EPB officials stated that they aimed to achieve emission targets through public education first, then regulation. EPB officials were also considering public consultations in formulating new environmental policies.

